

National Child Abuse Prevention Month

RESOURCE GUIDE - APRIL 2026

APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

April is designated as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. We are called through scripture and teaching to protect the life and dignity of the human person. Throughout the year, but especially in the month of April, all are asked to increase awareness, to educate ourselves and the community, and to seek healing for those who have been so tragically impacted by this horror. The attached resources can be incorporated throughout the month of April to observe National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

PINWHEEL GARDEN:

A pinwheel garden represents what we want for all children - a Happy, Safe and Carefree Childhood. Consider planting one!



ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA - 2025



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- IUN Forum Invite
- Thank you!

SEE THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE IDEAS ON HOW TO MAKE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH HAVE A GREATER IMPACT AT YOUR LOCATIONS

HELPFUL LINKS:

<https://preventchildabuse.org/latest-activity/april-is-child-abuse-prevention-month/>

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/preventionmonth/>

<https://www.usccb.org/committees/communications/abuse-prevention-resources>



Our local Victim Assistance Coordinator,

Cheryl Sopo, is available to help anyone who has been abused or victimized by someone representing the Catholic Church.

Cheryl can be reached at (219) 588-9089.

**Prayer for the Healing of Abuse Victims**

Mindful that Jesus' resurrection transforms all who believe, we as church embrace our shared responsibility to protect our children and youth, and to ensure that they grow up knowing they are safe and loved. In solidarity with those victims who have endured the pain of abuse, we re-dedicate ourselves to their healing by increasing our own awareness and understanding, by contributing to the safe environment and practices of our church, and by extending our efforts out into the world.



Conscientes de que la resurrección de Jesús transforma a todos los que creen, nosotros, como iglesia, aceptamos nuestra responsabilidad compartida de proteger a nuestros niños y jóvenes, y asegurarnos de que crezcan sabiendo que son seguros y amados. En solidaridad con aquellas víctimas que han sufrido el dolor del abuso, nos re-dedicamos a la sanación en creciendo nuestra propia conciencia y comprensión, contribuyendo al ambiente seguro y las prácticas de nuestra iglesia, y extendiendo nuestros esfuerzos hacia el mundo.

Virtus has provided visual resources and examples of notes (shown below) that can be included in your **weekly Church bulletin** or **other social media**. Consider scheduling these to share a different image/post each week!

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

VIRTUS®
Excellence
Builds
Trust

**Increase awareness,
communicate concerns,
report abuse, and save lives**

It is up to us as caring adults and parents, all of us, to identify risks, and to guide and protect the most vulnerable. Together, we can do this!

www.virtus.org

**OUR ACTIONS AS SAFE ADULTS
CAN DRAMATICALLY AFFECT
EVERY CHILD'S WELLBEING, EVEN
INTO THEIR ADULTHOOD!**



When we give children opportunities for disclosure and the knowledge that we will believe them, they are more likely to bring their troubles to us (even situations involving abuse). This helps us to stop the abuse & provide support—reducing risk factors for additional harm, *increasing a child's resilience and assisting the healing process.*



One conversation with children about healthy boundaries isn't enough to keep them safe. Bring it up often & keep the rules simple—with specific examples & role-playing, teaching respect for self & others.

www.virtus.org

Our community is dedicated to protecting our children! Join us in spreading the word about child protection by sharing this important message!

Here at (insert Church name) we are dedicated to protecting our children and ensuring a safe environment for all. Join us in spreading the word!

Let's continue to work together to create a brighter, safer future for our children and youth. Thank you for all that you do to protect children!

Every child deserves a safe environment to grow and thrive. Let's continue to work together to make this a reality!

Join us in extra prayer this month for children—that they be safe, protected and find a safe haven through each of us and in our shared spaces. Amen!

Looking to make a difference in the wellbeing of children? Join us in our upcoming safe environment course! Knowledge is power in the fight against child abuse!

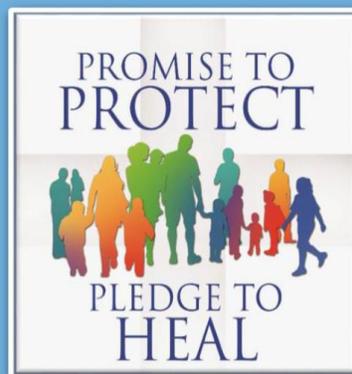
We don't just learn how to prevent abuse in the Protecting God's Children® sessions, we also learn ways to create safe places in which children can disclose about it so that we can help the situation to stop. Thank you for sharing in our commitment to keep children safe!

Every day, we pour our hearts into protecting the most vulnerable among us—our children and youth—and guiding them into healthy relationships with God and each other. Did you know that April is officially recognized as Child Abuse Prevention Month? What a great opportunity for us to shine a light on this critical issue. Thank you for being a part of our community and this critical mission!

LITURGICAL AIDS

Petitions

- For the children who are wounded and tearful, that they may find comfort and healing, we pray to the Lord.
- For those who are living in fear, that they may find safety, we pray to the Lord.
- For those who have had their innocence stolen, may they overcome the darkness and find the light of your heavenly kingdom, we pray to the Lord.
- For those affected by abuse, in all of it's forms, that they may find the courage and strength and continue to grow and trust in the love of our Lord, we pray to the Lord.
- For civic leaders entrusted with upholding the common good and justice, that they may act with wisdom grounded in faith, we pray to the Lord.
- The those who provide accompaniment, that they continue their work with grace and compassion imbued with the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.
- For the Universal Church to recognize and acknowledge our failings, and diligently work to repair past injustices, we pray to the Lord.



Here is a look at how some of our locations promote Safe Environment...

From the website of Nativity of our Savior School:

Protecting God's Children

Diocese of Gary Safe Environment Policy

A PROGRAM AND SERVICE OF
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RISK RETENTION GROUP, INC.

VIRTUS[®]Online

The Diocese of Gary and Nativity of our Savior School have procedures to provide a safe environment that protects children from verbal, physical and sexual abuse. Our staff and any volunteers involved with our students are required to participate in a VIRTUS training program, which is offered through the Diocese of Gary. **Both the online VIRTUS training session and background check must be complete before volunteering for events during the school day or working directly with our students.** Please note that in addition to the initial training session, a monthly bulleting must be read and completed for 24 months in order for full training completion. Failure to complete the monthly bulletins can cause your VIRTUS account to be suspended.

***Important:** AS OF JULY 1st, 2017, any adult wishing to volunteer during the school day or work with our children must complete this process in addition to completing the VIRTUS program. Background checks are completed online through your VIRTUS account. The cost will be \$15, paid by you, and is good for 5 years.*

PLEASE BE AWARE THERE IS A \$15 FEE FOR THIS BACKGROUND CHECK. IF YOU DO NOT PAY UP FRONT AND NATIVITY IS CHARGED, A \$15 CHARGE WILL BE ADDED TO YOUR FACTS ACCOUNT FOR THIS FEE. Please note that some background checks may have additional charges for out of state checks.

COMMITTED TO PROTECTING YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Human Resource/Safe Environment Office is dedicated to providing service and guidance. If you have a matter to discuss or report regarding the protection of youth and vulnerable adults, please contact:

- Cheryl Sopo – Victim Assistance Coordinator (219) 588-9089
- Kelly Venegas – Chief Human Resources Officer and Bishop McClory's Delegate for Sexual Misconduct Cases (219) 769-9292 ext. 88224 or kvenegas@dcdgary.org
- Kathy Lafakis – Safe Environment Coordinator (219) 769-9292 ext. 88280 or klafakis@dcdgary.org



Diocese of Gary
dcdgary.org

From the website of Aquinas Catholic Community School:**VIRTUS Online Training**

- Go to virtusonline.org
- Click on First-Time Registrant button (located on the left side of the screen)
- Click on Begin the Registration Process
- Select Your Organization (Gary, IN Diocese)
- Click on the Select button
- Answer the question "Have you previously registered with VIRTUS Online"?
- Create an USER ID
- Create a Password

- When entering your name type it as it is listed on your Driver's License or State ID
- The Organization is Aquinas School at St. Andrew's
- Answer the remaining Questions

- Begin the background check process
- When entering your name type it as it is listed on your Driver's License or State ID
- Choose I DO NOT Volunteer to pay for the background check (Aquinas School will pay for the background check)

Call Marie Wilson at 219-682-0322 with any questions.



From the website of Bishop Noll Institute:

VOLUNTEER AT BNI

Bishop Noll offers many ways for our stakeholders to have a direct influence on our students. Whether you are an alum, parent or community member, volunteering opportunities come in many forms. Volunteers have the option of working directly with students and faculty members shaping the future of Bishop Noll Institute. Options include the following; event committees, club & athletic fundraisers, concessions, blood drives, school supervision, reunion organizer, athletic coach, religious retreats, school board members and much more!

VIRTUS TRAINING

All participants looking to volunteer or mentor students at Bishop Noll must complete VIRTUS Training. This program helps insure individuals are treating out young learners with passion, respect and integrity throughout their experience. VIRTUS is the brand name that identifies best practices programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote "rightdoing" within religious organizations. The VIRTUS programs empower organizations and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church.

[LEARN MORE](#)

From the website of Our Lady of Grace School:

All individuals who work with or have contact with children at Our Lady of Grace School **must** complete a criminal background check and attend a Safe Environment Workshop in accordance with the Bishop's Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth. This includes **parents volunteering as coaches, chaperones**, or in **any** other capacity.

Volunteers are required to complete the **VIRTUS** "Protecting God's Children" training, which focuses on preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. The workshop, available online or in person, includes ongoing education. You can find more information at virtusonline.org. Proof of participation is mandatory for volunteering.

Students also participate in the "Virtus for Children" program, which teaches safety skills to protect against exploitation, abduction, and violence.



Please Save the Date for the
Annual IUN Forum on Child Abuse and Neglect
Friday, April 24, 2026
More information to follow...

Thank you!

Thank you for all you do to ensure a Safe Environment. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. It's encouraging to know that we have safe adults working with our children who are properly trained to spot signs of abuse and respond appropriately!

